



Bobby Morris Playfield Renovation Project

Public Meeting #2

Nov. 20, 2003

Meeting Notes

Staff Present:

- **Royal Alley-Barnes**, Central East Sector Manager
- **Rich Hennings**, Major Maintenance Manager
- **Eric Gold**, Project Manager, Landscape Architect
- **Ted Holden**, Sr. Landscape Architect
- **Kim Baldwin**, Landscape Architect
- **Mike Mirante**, Ballfield Coordinator
- **Joelle Ligon**, Sr. Public Relations Specialist

7 p.m. Welcome

- The first 15 minutes of the meeting were set aside for the community to view the latest drawings for the project and to have informal discussions with Parks staff about the design alternatives.

7:15 p.m. Introduction

- Parks Major Maintenance Manager Rich Hennings gave some background on the project, acknowledged that there were divergent desires for this field, and mapped out Parks' plan for moving forward.
- Rich explained that through Council action on Friday, Nov. 14, the Bobby Morris Playfield project had \$400,000 taken from its budget, leaving the project with about \$1.3 million. This is not enough money to build the project to the standards set out in the design program.
- In addition, Council froze Parks' ability to spend any of the \$1.2 million construction money remaining on the project – until Council approves the ballfield design.
- Rich also explained that the hours of field use, which once topped 2,000 hours, has fallen to around 800 since the installation of a natural-synthetic turf blend in 1997. Parks' intention is to proceed with the installation of artificial turf, which will allow the field to be programmed to its maximum capacity.

- The public meeting was held to gain input from the public into the project design. Parks will proceed with the design process while working with Council through the Superintendent and Parks Board to restore the project's original funding.

7:25 p.m. Overview of three design alternatives

- Complete narrative descriptions of the alternatives presented including graphics will be posted to this website in the very near future.

7:55 p.m. Comments and questions

(This part of the meeting notes has been organized into two sections: questions and comments. All questions and comments came from community members; answers and feedback can be attributed to Parks staff.)

Comment Section

- **Comment:** Parks should research the possibility of making the turf integral with the bases. It is a newer technology, and being used at some state colleges. Also, it is cheaper. **Feedback:** Parks agreed to look into that possibility.
- **Comment:** This park can have up to 3,000 programmable hours. (**Clarification:** This figure came from a community member. According to the Parks Field Scheduler, Bobby Morris Playfield, at full capacity, can accommodate up to 2,200 hours of programmable play.)
- **Comment:** A lot of the grass fields throughout the City are torn up, and in a very poor playing condition. We need this field back as soon as possible.
- **Comment:** A synthetic turf field is more programmable than a grass field.
- **Comment:** The fields close in November because they are in such poor condition at that time of year. A synthetic turf allows more playing hours.
- **Comment:** I am concerned about the loss of green space on Capitol Hill. We have community gardens and pocket parks throughout the neighborhood, but Volunteer Park is our only other source of open greenspace. I would like to see open greenspace more thoughtfully considered. We have small yards in Capitol Hill, and our greenspaces are important to us. **Feedback:** The field will continue to be "green," and will have hours of non-programmed use throughout the year. In addition, covering the Lincoln Park Reservoir and constructing Cal Anderson Park adds several acres of new greenspace to Capitol Hill.
- **Comment:** I don't think it's really practical to program this field for 3,000 hours of play, given that there is no designated parking at this park. In addition, it doesn't look like the site has the capacity. It seems like even though organizations

schedule the field, they don't like to use it; it seems they would rather be somewhere else.

- **Comment:** I play Ultimate Frisbee and live nearby. Capitol Hill has enough population density to use the field without parking. This has been such a source of frustration for us because we need more field time in this neighborhood. We don't have enough, and constantly we have to go to other cities, up north and on the east side, to play because lack of adequate fields in Seattle.
- **Comment:** There is more greenspace in Seattle and on Capitol Hill than there was 10 years ago. In addition, with the reservoir cover, we'll have more than ever. I think we have plenty of greenspace. Also, I don't think we need natural turf to make it feel real. The grass out there now is a mixture between real grass and synthetic turf.
- **Comment:** In response to the high use of the field, 2,000 hours are evened out over the course of a year. Neighbors might be concerned about peaks and valleys, but the peak load doesn't necessarily change.
- **Comment:** From the youth sports league perspective, the more fields centrally located, the better. It's an environmental disaster for me to have to drive a car all the way to Shoreline so my kids can play. The fields should be centrally located, and available to everyone.
- **Comment:** As a field scheduler for Capitol Hill Soccer, I can tell you we have to ship our kids elsewhere because of lack of adequate playing fields in our area. I like Option #2. I want kids to have as much space to play as possible. This is also a cheaper option. We need to use these fields, because when they are in use, there is less of an opportunity to use the park for illegitimate activities.
- **Comment:** Regarding the pedestrian environment, I don't understand the pros and cons of moving fences. I think Parks needs to request that the Seattle Police Department provide a formal Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) analysis of the site. **Feedback:** Parks staff indicated that they would work with the SPD to provide that analysis.
- **Comment:** I second the idea of a CPTED analysis, without bias toward any particular plan. I have concerns about Option #1. I think it creates corridors that will make park visitors feel like they couldn't get out.

- **Comment:** I like Option #2 because the fencing feels better. It reduces the sense of entrapment. The fencing doesn't make it very inviting.
- **Comment:** I am a neighbor who lives close to the park. At this point, the field is almost unusable. Infill turf seems like a good idea. I would also like to register my support for a CPTED analysis.
- **Comment:** I would like to see an analysis of the reported incidents of people being struck by balls. **Feedback:** Parks recognizes that the design must address current accepted criteria for activity separation.
- **Comment:** It seems like there would be money for many years of maintenance if we put in a grass field, which would be much less expensive.
- **Comment:** I would like to see this come back before the community. We need to have another chance to comment on these designs.

Question Section:

- **Question:** What's the installation cost for a grass field. **Answer:** Typically around \$850,000.
- **Question:** Why can't we replace the turf with a grass field at a cost of \$300,000. **Answer:** Parks will replace the existing natural/synthetic turf with a pure synthetic turf. Over the long run, given the cost-benefit analysis and increased playing time, synthetic turf is a more durable, reliable and cost-effective alternative.
- **Question:** How do we access the new building? **Answer:** There will be a service vehicle entrance.
- **Question:** Is the orientation of the baseball and softball fields set in stone? **Answer:** Parks intends to keep the fields in the same position. The interior facing orientation is to accommodate the long flight of baseballs and keep them inside the playfield area.
- **Question:** When thinking about youth soccer, how do the baseball and soccer elements work with each other? Having players run over dirt is unacceptable. **Answer:** The players will have to run over both synthetic turf and dirt.
- **Question:** Why don't we use brown turf? **Answer:** The green material maintains the green surface at the site. A material change would change the look and feel of the field.

- **Question:** There are two Neighborhood Matching Fund projects in this park – fencing and landscaping. Will either of these projects be disturbed by the current project? **Answer:** There will be no change outside the fence on Pine Street.
- **Question:** Which scheme raises the grade? **Answer:** Schemes #2 and #3. Parks anticipates that since we are reducing the grade on the field, the same dirt can be used. It would simply be redistributed. Also, these changes to the field will develop significantly better ADA access. Scheme #1 would remove the fencing on Pine Street between the path and the field. Scheme #3 would be exactly the same as #2, except it would ... None of the alternatives would affect the landscaping.
- **Question:** If the money doesn't come back, what do we do? **Answer:** Parks will continue with the design process, and work with Council to get the money reinstated. We do not have the green light from Council to move forward with construction until after they have approved the design. Parks expects to make a design presentation to Council sometime in the spring.
- **Question:** Where are the bleachers? How do spectators get to see the games? **Answer:** The bleachers are shown associated with the softball and baseball fields. They would be moved onto the field for soccer.
- **Question:** Why did the number of programmable hours fall off? Is it due to feedback from users? **Answer:** Parks installed a somewhat experimental product in 1997, which was a mix of natural grass and synthetic turf. We believed this was the answer to creating a better playing surface. Because it performed poorly in the Pacific Northwest climate, the surface actually had the effect of reducing the number of programmable hours on the field by two-thirds. Our intention now is to remedy that problem with the installation of a proven synthetic-turf technology that has been successfully used on Seattle playfields for many years now.
- **Question:** Where is the controversy around this issue? Did someone recommend the fencing for safety? And if so, who? **Answer:** Parks recommended changing the fencing configuration to make the park safer for pedestrians and field users.
- **Question:** Why was the funding cut? I called Councilmember Richard Conlin's office and they said it wasn't in the Joint Athletic Fields Development Plan

(JAFDP). **Answer:** Bobby Morris was not in the original JAFDP because at the original writing of that document, the field had just been renovated. Parks included Bobby Morris in the December 2002 revision as an unfunded priority. Council has not yet adopted that revision.

- **Question:** How much adult soccer will be available on this field? I have lived in this area since I was a kid, and I haven't been able to use the field for soccer since 1997. Soccer has been relegated behind softball and baseball. I would like to know how the sports played on this field are prioritized. **Answer:** The soccer field is big enough for adult soccer. The way priorities for this field are determined may need to be revisited.
- **Question:** At Riverview Playfield in West Seattle, grass fields are going in over there because it is a community priority. Why can't that happen over here? **Answer:** Riverview is not a lighted field, which means it doesn't get as much use.
- **Question:** This is a multi-use park in a small, tight space. There are walkers and other casual users who don't seem to get as much attention. Can we program this park differently with some uses other than hard ball or soccer? **Answer:** The field surface is an integral component in a larger city-wide recreation programming effort. The Department welcomes requests for diverse uses, and accommodates them to greatest degree possible. Recognizing the needs of adjacent uses is a critical consideration when working with active spaces like ballfields. Our proposals will all take these needs into account.
- **Question:** Do all the options yield the same number of programmable hours? **Answer:** Yes.
- **Question:** What is the construction time? **Answer:** About five months.
- **Question:** My biggest concern is that we get this done. All three options look basically the same to me. I don't really care which one we go with. What can we, as a community, do to make sure that this project happens? **Answer:** Parks is still moving forward with the design process, and we plan to make our presentation to Council after the first of the year. Everyone here, if they have signed in and given us their contact information, will receive notice of that Council meeting.
- **Question:** I am very concerned that this is the last chance for public input into the project design. Will there be more opportunity for community input? **Answer:**

In addition to the Council review, the project will be before the Parks Board in January. Also, Parks will post the options and the notes from this meeting on the website.

8:40 p.m. Thank you and wrap up (Because the comments and questions period of the meeting lasted longer than the meeting time allowed, Parks extended the meeting by about 10 minutes.)

- Parks Central East Sector Manager Royal Alley-Barnes thanked everyone for coming and indicated that there would be at least two more public forums for the project – a Parks Board meeting and a City Council meeting. She encouraged everyone to get on the mailing list to be kept updated about the project.
- The community was asked if they had a preference for either of the three concepts presented. A large majority of those responding preferred Concept #2.